



SUPERMAN & THE PHANTOM STRANGER™

ACTION COMICS®

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585
FEB. 87



**"...AND GRAVES
GIVE UP
THEIR DEAD..."**

by **BYRNE** and **GIORDANO**



AND GRAVES GIVE UP THEIR DEAD...

DOES THE SOIL REMEMBER?

CONSIDER THIS PLOT OF LAND, A FEW ACRES OF UNHALLOWED GROUND.

HERE LIES THE ROTTED REMAINS OF A HUNDRED EVIL MEN, THEIR LIVES SNUFFED OUT BY THE SOCIETY THEY DEFIED.

MURDERERS, KIDNAPPERS, RAPISTS. MEN WHOSE LIVES WERE A CATALOG OF PAIN AND DEATH FOR ALL WHO CROSSED THEIR BLOOD-STAINED PATHS.

DOES THE SOIL REMEMBER? DOES EVIL LEAVE ITS BLACK STAIN EVEN ON THE INNOCENT EARTH?

I KNOW AND I WILL TELL YOU, IF YOU ARE STOUT ENOUGH OF HEART TO WALK A WHILE ALONG THE PATH I DAILY TREAD.

FOLLOW ME... FOR I AM...

PHANTOM STRANGER



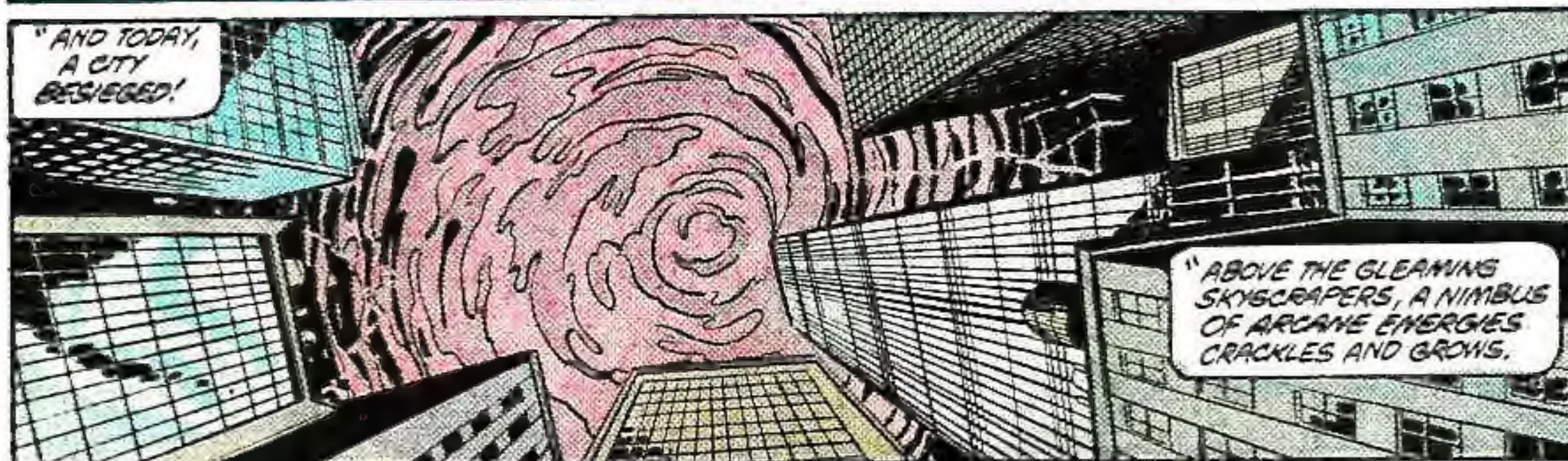
THE TALE BEGINS
ONE HUNDRED MILES
FROM THAT FORGOTTEN,
NEGLECTED GRAVE-
YARD.

IT BEGINS IN THE CITY OF
METROPOLIS--LARGEST, AND
SOME SAY, GREATEST CITY OF
THE MORTAL WORLD.

A PROUD CITY OF CLOUD-
PIERCING TOWERS. A CITY OF
INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE.
CAPITAL CITY OF THE WORLD.



"AND TODAY,
A CITY
BESIEGED!"



"ABOVE THE GLEAMING
SKYSCRAPERS, A NIMBUS
OF ARCAINE ENERGIES
CRACKLES AND GROWS.

"AND AT THE VERY SEETHING HEART
OF THAT MAELSTROM, A HERO
FEELS THE COLD HAND OF DEATH
CLOSE TIGHT ABOUT HIM."

YOU... CAN'T...
WIN...
ARATHAZA.



NO, MORTAL?

SUPERMAN YOU
MAY BE, AND POWERFUL
IN YOUR OWN SMALL
WAY...

... BUT I AM
POWER
BEYOND ALL
KNOWING.

I AM POWER
BEYOND AND
BEYOND.





MAYBE.) BUT FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AGO YOU WERE BARB KOWALESKI, SECRETARY.

YOUR POWER IS ALL EXTERNAL, ARATHAZA.

TACKED ON.

NOT LIKE YOURS, EH, SUPERMAN?



GREAT SUPERMAN! YOUR ALABY CELLS DRAW POWER FROM THE YELLOW LIGHT OF THE SUN.

BUT I CAN DRAIN THAT POWER.

I CAN EMPTY YOU, AS IF POURING WATER FROM A VESSEL, SUPERMAN.

AND AS YOUR POWER DIMS...

...SO DOES MINE INCREASE!



THAT'S THE KEY!

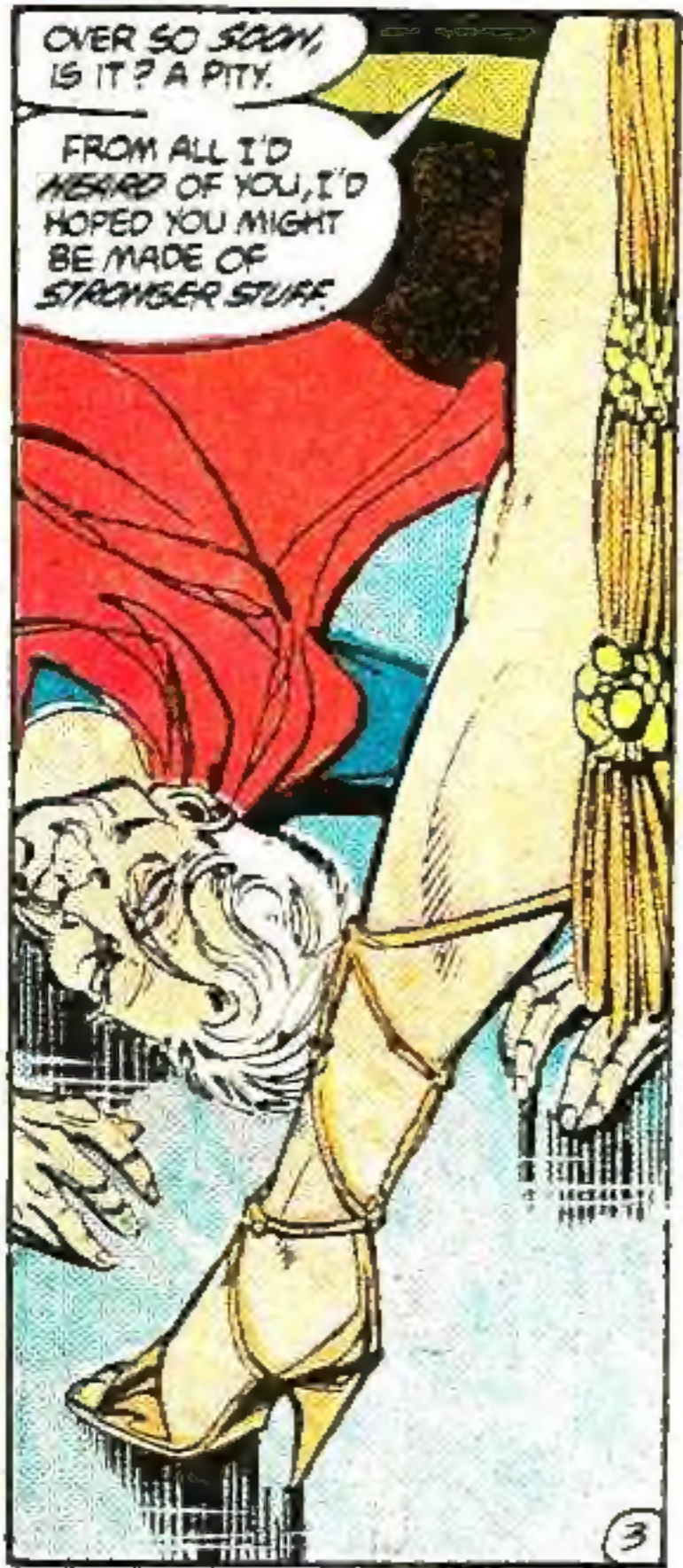
SHE'S DRAINING MY ENERGY, MY LIFE-FORCE, EVERY TIME I STRUGGLE AGAINST HER...

...SHE GROWS STRONGER.



WHICH LEAVES ME ONLY ONE CHANCE...

SUPERMAN!



OVER SO SOON, IS IT? A PITY.

FROM ALL I'D HEARD OF YOU, I'D HOPED YOU MIGHT BE MADE OF STRONGER STUFF.



I AM!!



AND IF YOU
HAD MORE
GOING FOR YOU
THAN GLORIFIED
CONJURING
TRICKS...

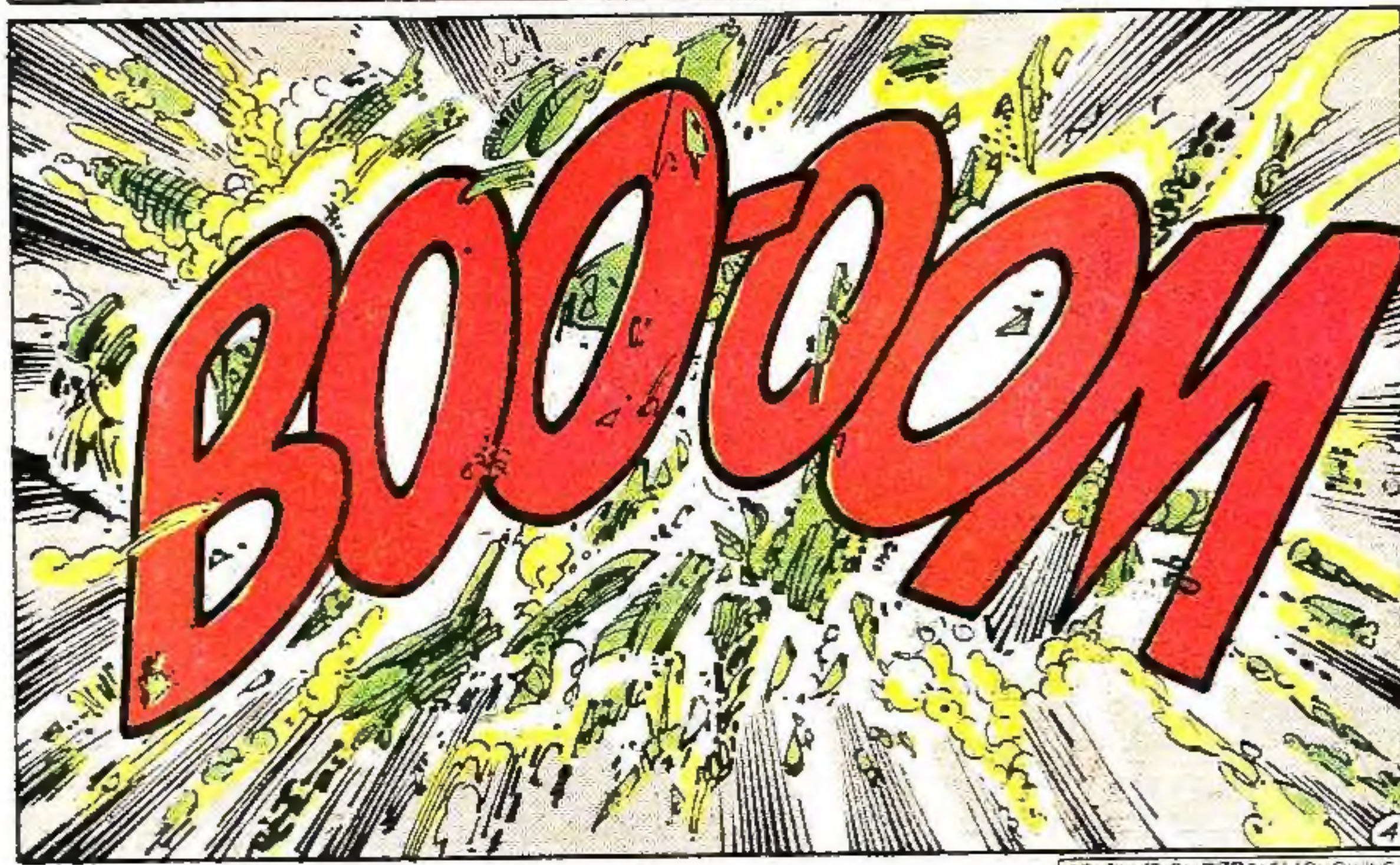
...YOU'D
KNOW
THAT.

BUT
NOW...



...IT'S
ALL
OVER!

SKKASH!





WHAT-WHAT...

HOW...

HOW DID YOU...??

I DID NOTHING, MS. KOWALESKI. YOU WERE DRAINING MY POWER TO CREATE YOUR MYSTIC MAELSTROM AND FLYING FORTRESS.

I GAMBLLED THAT IF I BECAME COMPLETELY AGGRESSIVE, THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY POWER TO DRAIN, AND YOUR STAFF WOULD EXHAUST ITSELF.

IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT.

WHEN I GRABBED YOUR STAFF AWAY FROM YOU I WAS USING NO MORE THAN NORMAL, HUMAN STRENGTH.

AND THAT WAS ENOUGH TO TAKE YOU OFF-GUARD, AND DEFEAT YOU.

A VICTORY FOR THE MAN OF STEEL. AN EASY VICTORY, YOU MAY SAY.

BUT CONSIDER THIS: BARBARA KOWALESKI IS NOT A TRULY EVIL WOMAN.

PETTY, YES. SPITEFUL AND MEAN, YES.

BUT NOT TRULY EVIL.

AND SO, ALTHOUGH THE WOMAN WHO CALLED HERSELF "ARATHAZA" HAS BEEN DEFEATED, IN THIS ENDING WE FIND ALSO A BEGINNING.

THE SKY-PALACE FALLS. DEPRIVED OF ENERGY, THE MYSTICAL FRAGMENTS DISSOLVE.



"A RAIN BECOMES A MIST BECOMES A VAPOR..."

"... BECOMING NOTHINGNESS LONG BEFORE IT TOUCHES THE GROUND."



"ALL IS GONE, AS IF IT NEVER WAS."

"ALL SAVE ONE TINY FRAGMENT."



"A PIECE OF THE JEWELLED STAFF OF ARATHAZA."

"A GLISTENING GEMSTONE OF GREAT ANTIQUITY..."



"HURLED BY THE FORCE OF THE MAGICAL EXPLOSION, IT SAILS A HUNDRED MILES ACROSS THE STATE."

"AND GREATER EVIL."

"TO LAND HERE..."

"FOR A MOMENT THE STRANGE
STONE LIES STILL AND QUIET,
HALF SUNK IN THE RAIN-WET
GROUND.

"THE MYSTIC FIRES WHICH
LATELY SEEMED TO FLICKER
DEEP WITHIN ITS AZURE
FACETS ARE DIM, DYING.



"THEN, WITHOUT PRIOR
WARNING, THE FLAMES
GROW BRIGHT.

"AROUND THE GEM THE
GROUND SEEMS TO
RIPPLE, LIKE STILL WATERS
DISTURBED BY A FALLING
STONE.



"AND THEN..."



"OBLIVIOUS TO THIS, THE MAN THE
WORLD KNOWS AS SUPERMAN
HEADS HOME TO THE SMALL
APARTMENT HE MAINTAINS AS
CLARK KENT.

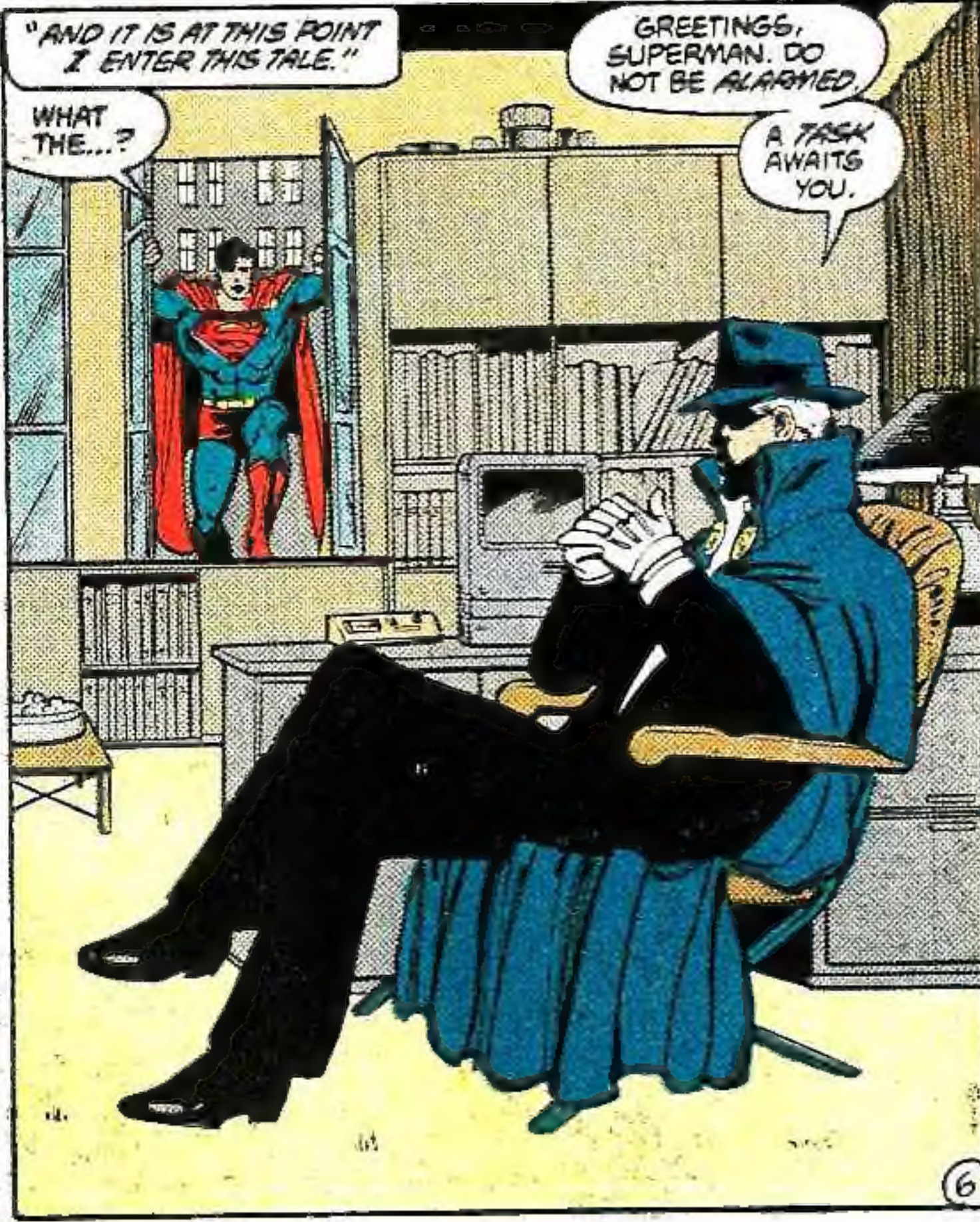


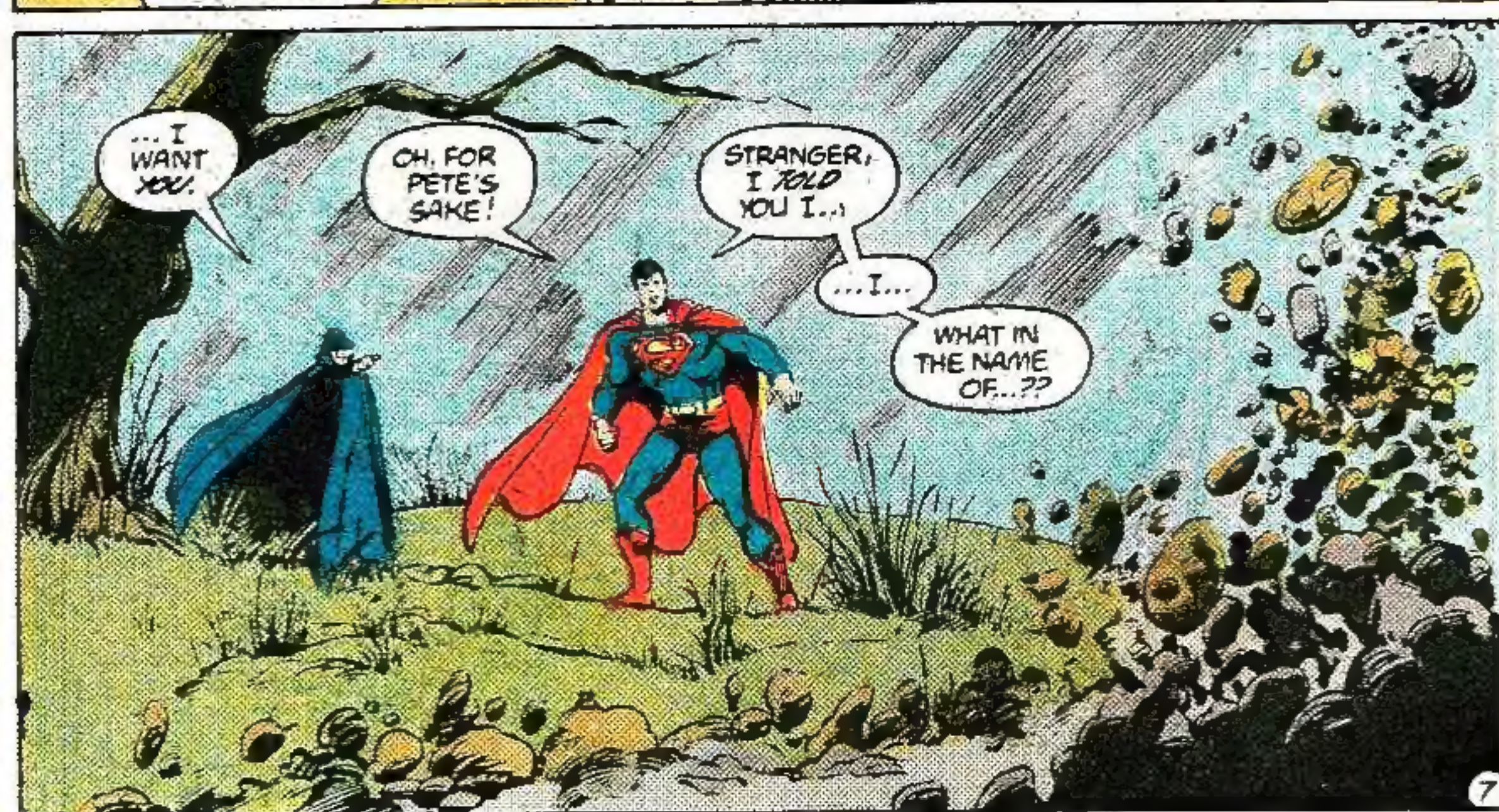
"AND IT IS AT THIS POINT
I ENTER THIS TALE."

WHAT
THE...?

GREETINGS,
SUPERMAN. DO
NOT BE ALARMED.

A TASK
AWAITS
YOU.







THAT IS
WHY I NEED
YOU,
SUPERMAN.

"LIGHTNING CRACKLES ABOUT
THE GIANT'S HIDEOUS HEAD.

"STONE AND EARTH FLOW
LIKE LIQUID AROUND
HIS BODY.

"HIS LAUGHTER BOOMS
ACROSS THE SWIRLING
LANDSCAPE.

"AND EVEN SUPERMAN FEELS THE TOUCH OF FEAR."

"BUT FEAR IS NOT A CONQUERING THING TO HIM.

"AND HE HAS STRENGTH OF WILL IN ALMOST INFINITE AMOUNT.

"BY FORCE OF WILL HE PUSHES BACK THE SHARP-FANGED THINGS THAT COME TO GNAW HIS VITALS.

"HE KNOWS THE POWER OF FEAR IS A LIE.

"HE KNOWS THAT FEAR CAN TRIUMPH ONLY WHEN THE WILL IS WEAK.

"BY FORCE OF WILL HE SHEDS THE BONDS OF EARTH.

"BY FORCE OF WILL HE HURDLES MOUNTAINS, AND REACHES OUT TO TOUCH THE MANY-CRATERED MOON.

"BY FORCE OF WILL HE TURNS HIS GAZE UPON THE SEETHING HORROR BELOW US ON THE HILLSIDE.

"YES, HE FEELS THE ICY TOUCH OF FEAR, BUT HE IS NOT COWED.

"HE IS **SUPERMAN!**"



"THE ADRENALINE PUMPS
INTO HIS VEINS..."

CURIOUS

"SUPERMAN IS AN ALIEN BEING,
BORN NOT ON EARTH BUT ON
THE LONG-AGO-LAUNCHED
PLANET KRYPTON."

"BUT, FOR ALL THAT, HE
IS REVERENTLY
HUMAN"

"HE THINKS AS A
HUMAN BEING, FEELS
AS A HUMAN BEING"

"HIS PHYSIOLOGY IS ALMOST
INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THAT
OF AN EARTH MAN"

"AND WHEN HE FIGHTS,
HE FIGHTS FOR ALL
MANKIND."

"FOR THE GOOD, STRONG
PRINCIPLES THAT SET
HUMANITY ASIDE."

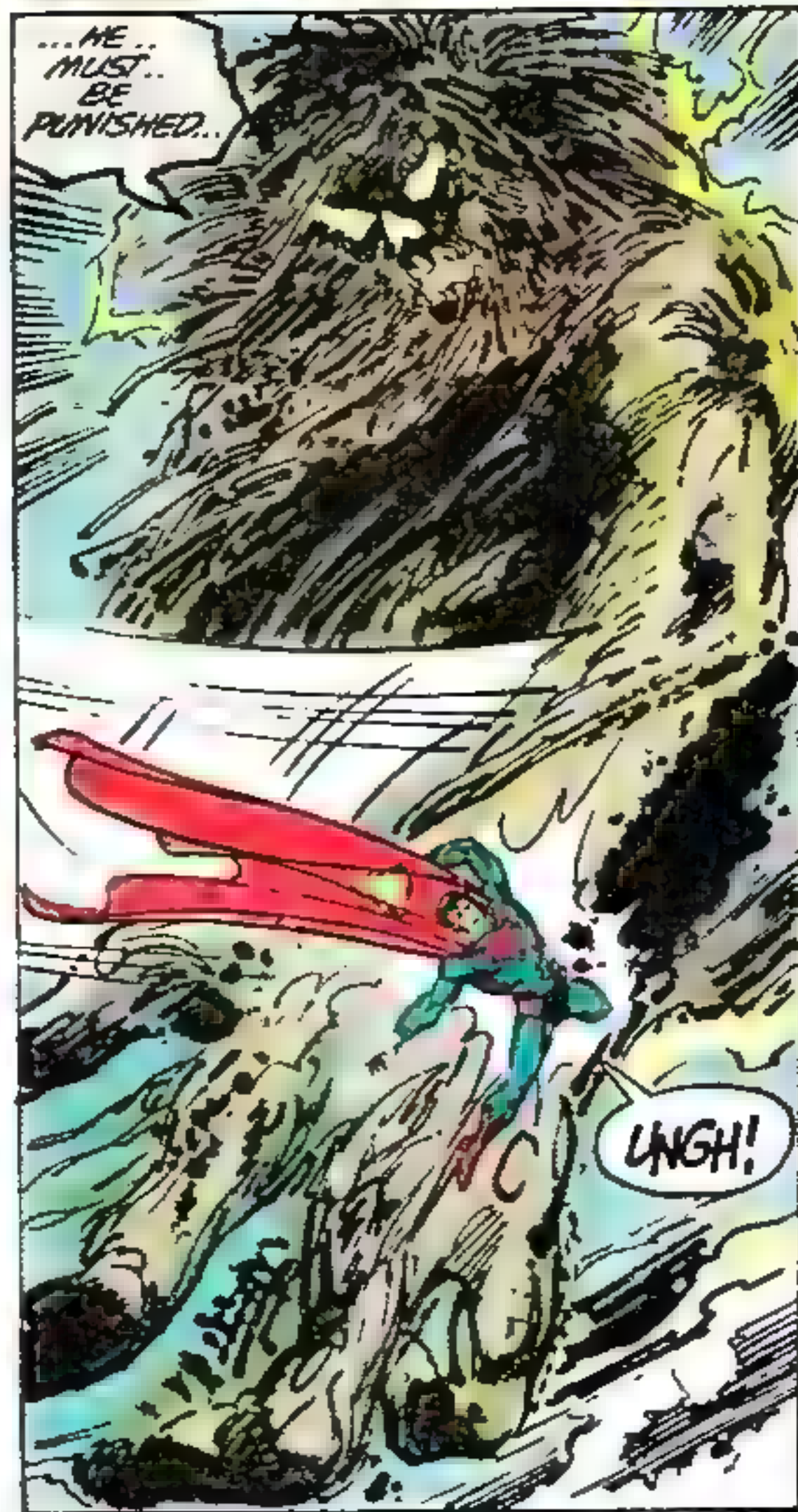
"FOR HE KNOWS THAT
MIGHT WITHOUT MORALITY
IS ONLY CORRUPTION DISGUISED"

"AND WHAT HE BATTLES HERE,
THIS DAY, IS CORRUPTION
PERSONIFIED!"



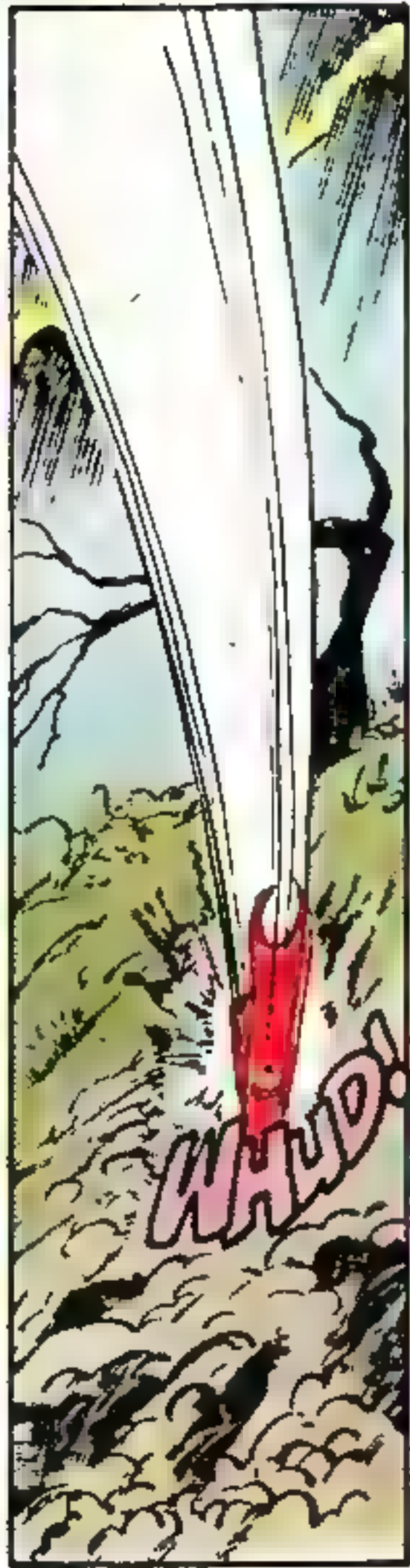
...HE...
ATTACKS...
US...

...HE...
HURTS...
US...



...HE...
MUST...
BE
PUNISHED...

UNGH!



WAAH!



GOOD
LORD!

THERE'S AN
INTELLECT
BEHIND THAT
THING!

IT'S NOT JUST
A MINDLESS MASS
OF MYSTICAL
FORCES..

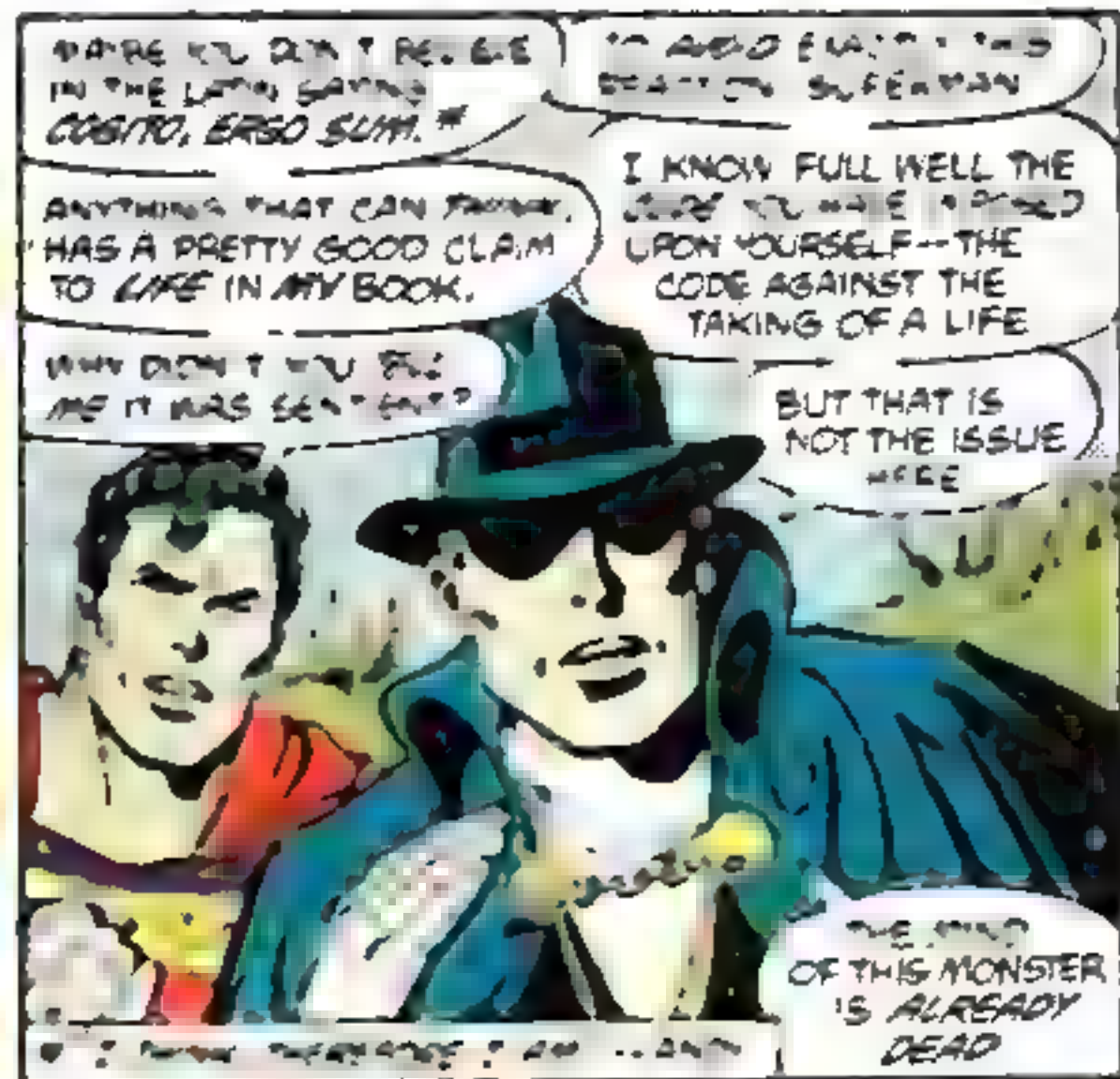
IT'S
ALIVE!!



NO SUPERMAN DO NOT BE DECEIVED THERE IS NO LIFE THERE

ONLY THE MEMORY OF LIFE.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, STRANGER? THAT THAT PILE OF EARTH ONLY THINKS IT'S ALIVE?



WELL YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THE LATIN SAYING COGITO, ERGO SUM. #

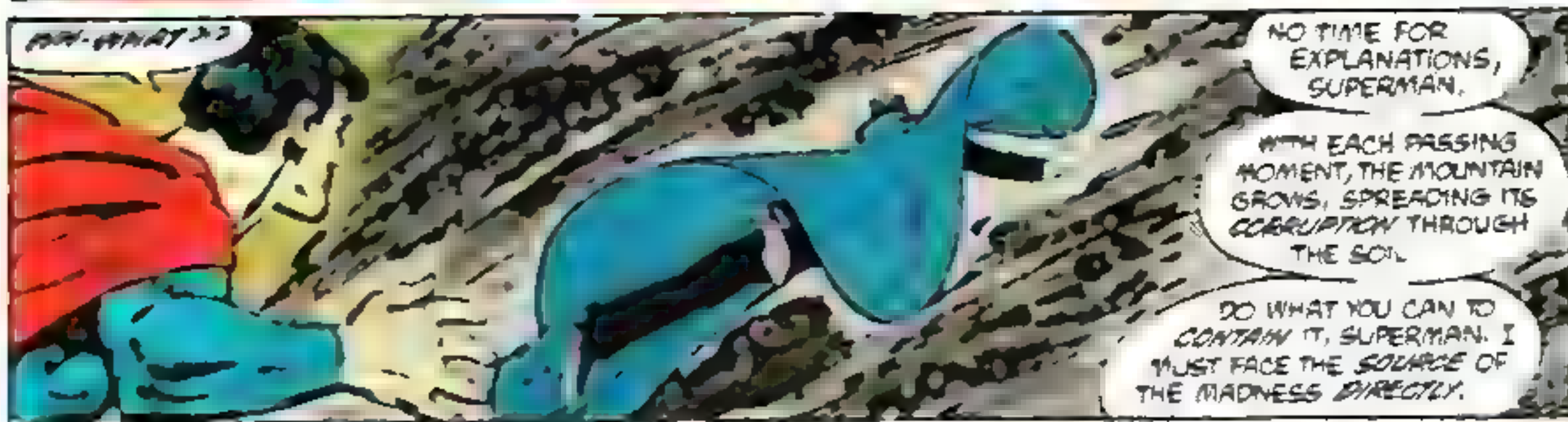
ANYTHING THAT CAN THINK HAS A PRETTY GOOD CLAIM TO LIFE IN MY BOOK.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME IT WAS SENTIENT?

I KNOW FULL WELL THE CODE YOU HAVE APPLIED UPON YOURSELF--THE CODE AGAINST THE TAKING OF A LIFE

BUT THAT IS NOT THE ISSUE HERE

THE MIND OF THIS MONSTER IS ALREADY DEAD



FOR WHAT??

NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS, SUPERMAN.

WITH EACH PASSING MOMENT, THE MOUNTAIN GROWS, SPREADING ITS CORRUPTION THROUGH THE SOIL

DO WHAT YOU CAN TO CONTAIN IT, SUPERMAN. I MUST FACE THE SOURCE OF THE MADNESS DIRECTLY.



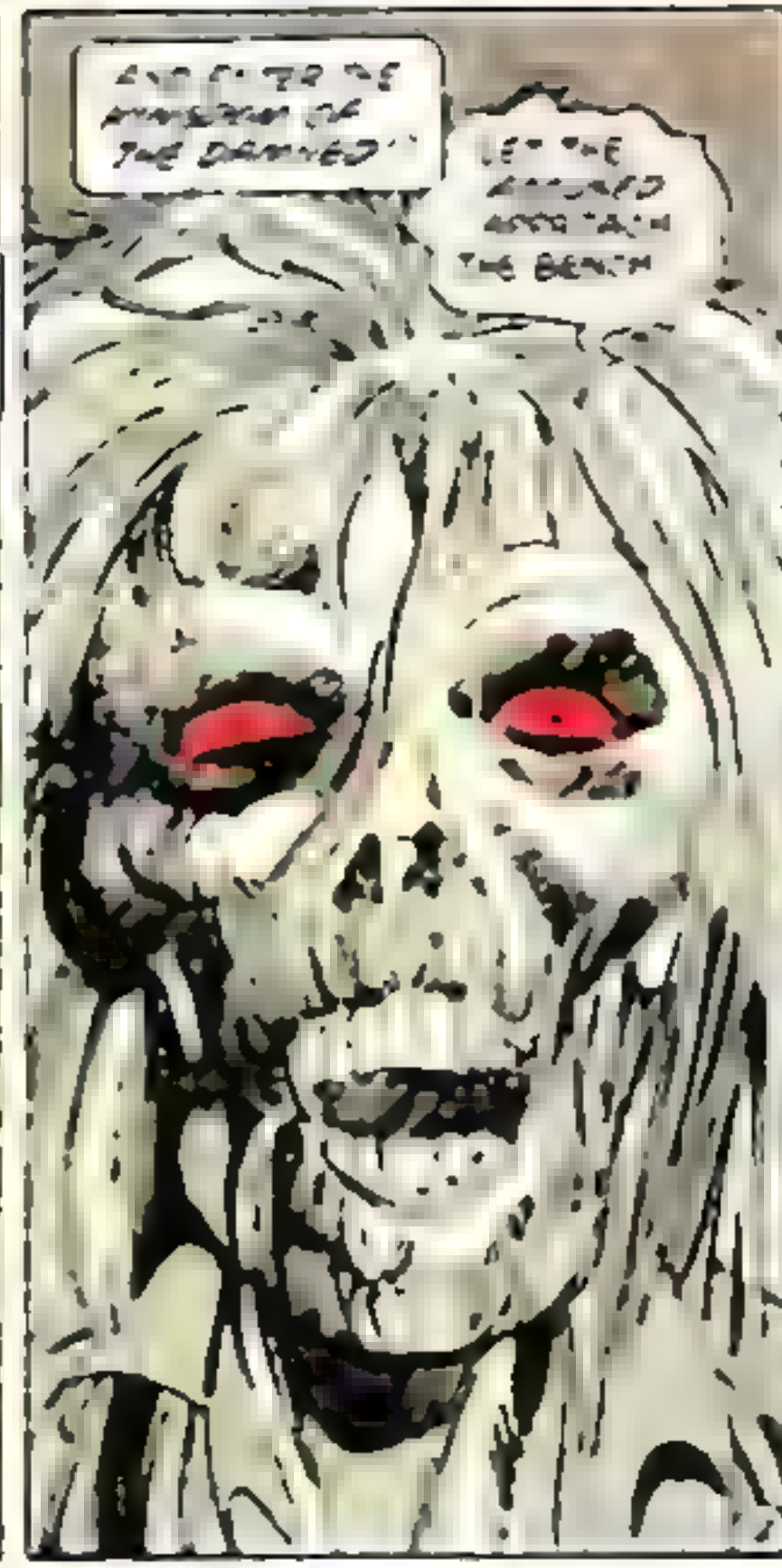
"INTO THE WHIRLING MINDS OF ROCK AND EARTH I WILL MISC"

"THE MOUNTAIN DOESN'T GAZE UP AT US: WE ARE ALREADY BEHIND ITS EFFECT"



"I STEP A-DONE THE BARRIERS OF THE DIMENSIONS"

"I LEAVE BEHIND THE SWEET, HAZY WORLD OF THE LIVING"



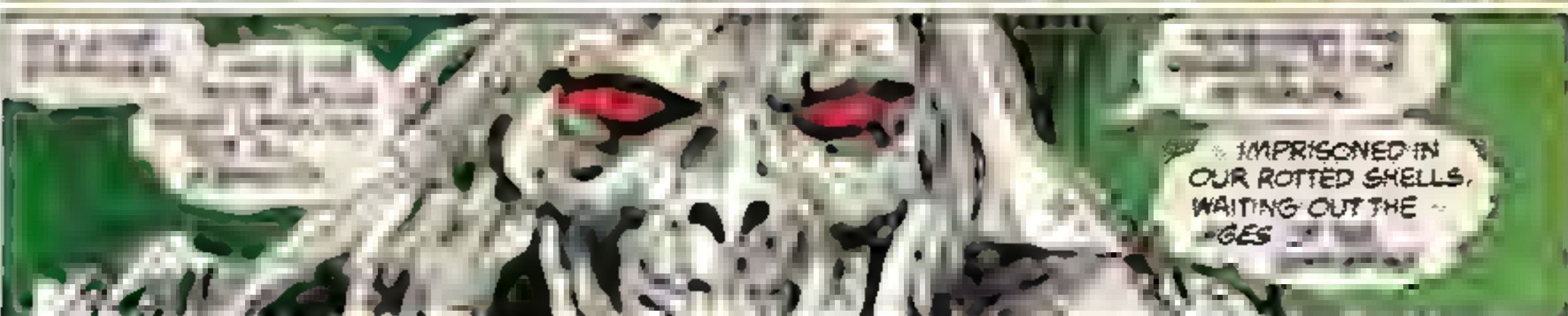
AND ENTER THE KINGDOM OF THE DAMNED"

LET THE DAMNED ASSAULT THE BENCH

OF WHAT DO YOU



IMPRISONED IN
OUR ROTTED SHELLS,
WAITING OUT THE
AGES



SING ME NO SAD
SONGS, DEAD
THINGS

CAME TO YOUR
UNHOLY STA

YOU BROU
GREAT PAIN
ALL AROU
YOU.

YOU SEIZED THE
POWER RESERVED
FOR THE GODS
THEMSELVES. A

DARE ASSUME
THE ROLE OF
INJURED

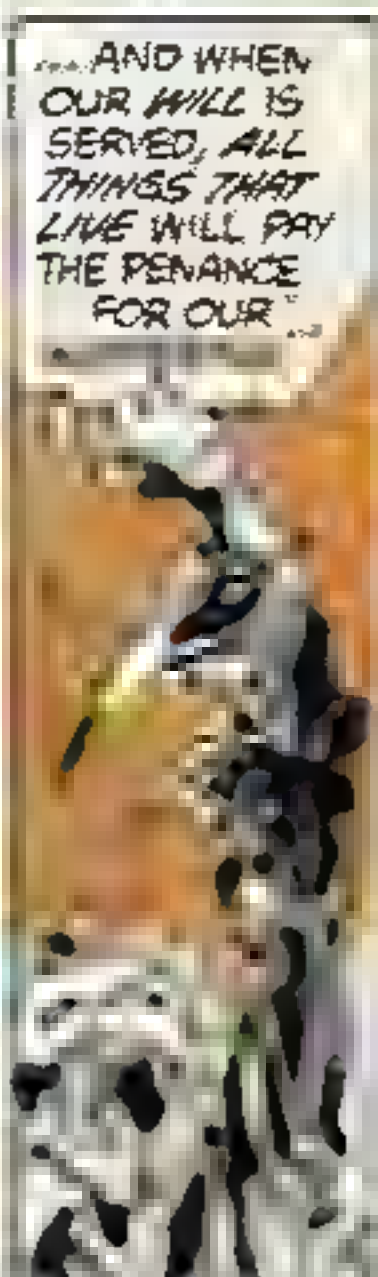


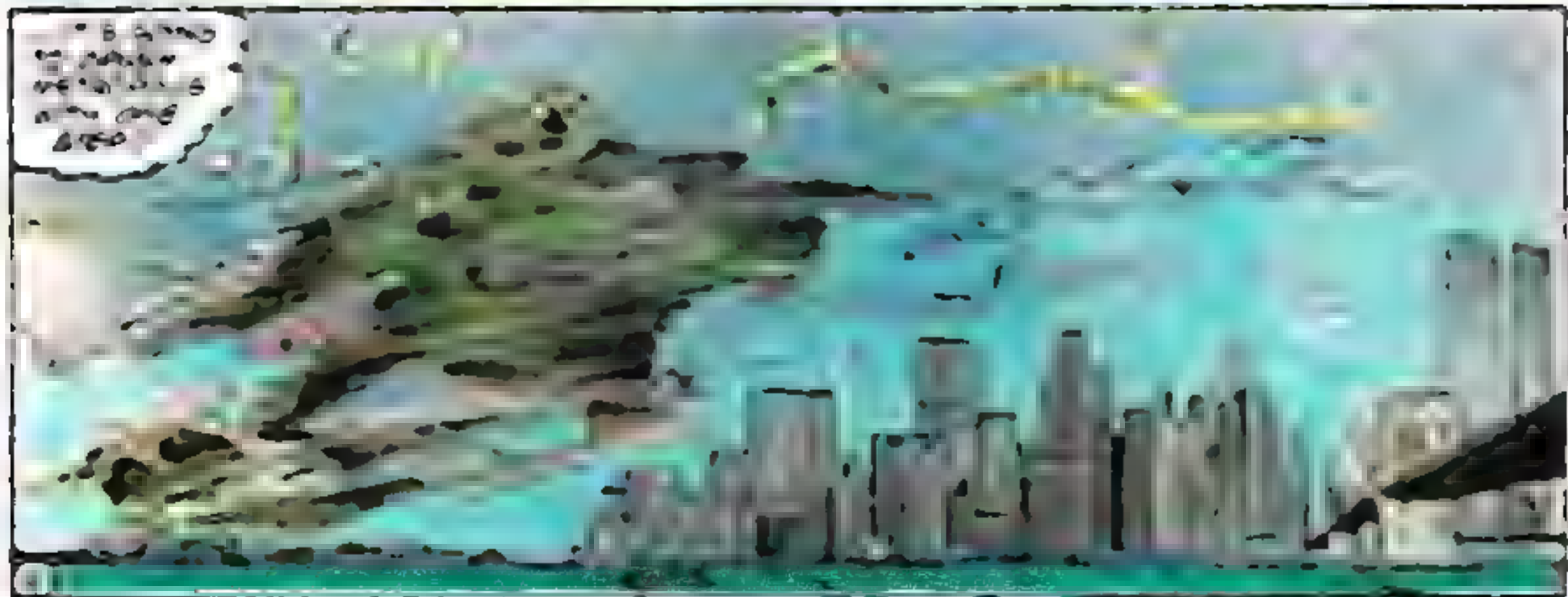
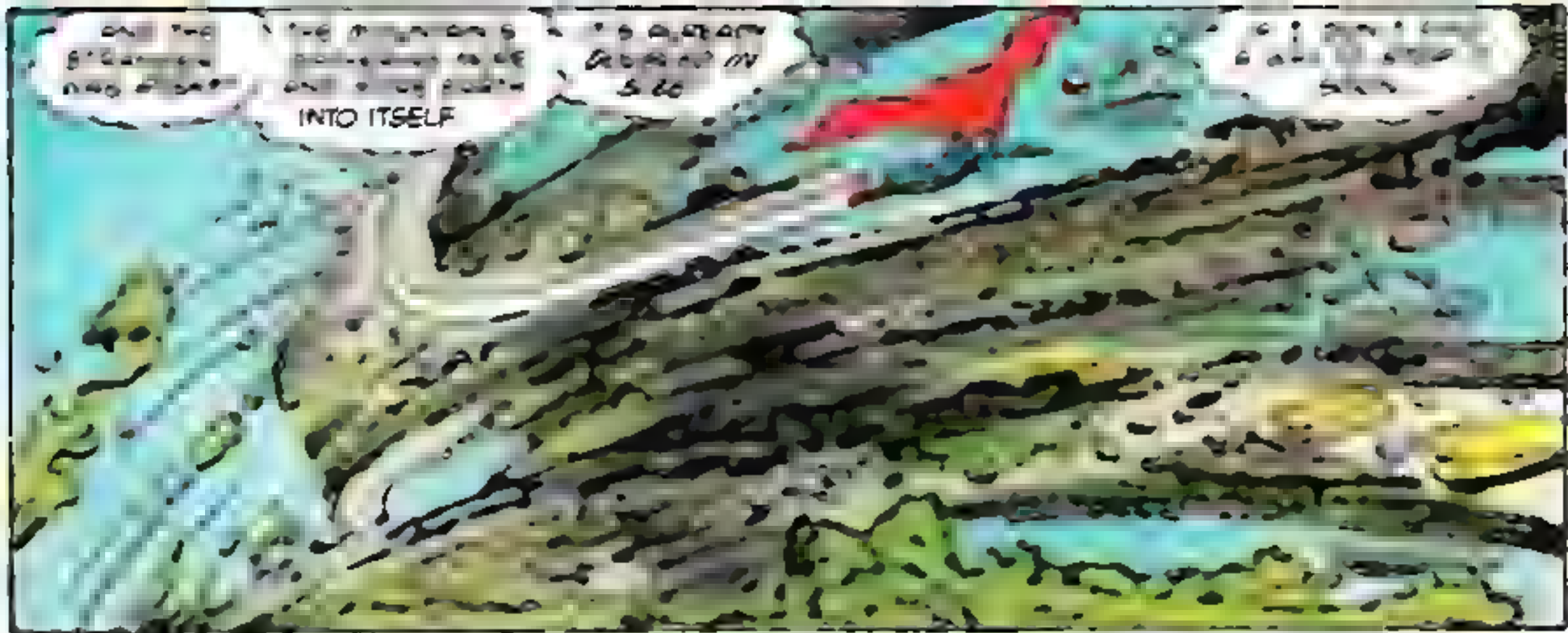
FOR WE HAVE
FOUND OURSELVES

OPPORTUNITY TO
MAKE OUR WAY INTO
THE KINGDOM OF
THE LIVING.



AND WHEN
OUR WILL IS
SERVED, ALL
THINGS THAT
LIVE WILL PAY
THE PENANCE
FOR OUR





I'VE GOT TO
STOP IT--AND
THE ONLY WAY
I CAN DO THAT
IS IF I STOP
WASTING TIME
TRYING TO
FIGHT IT.

I'VE GOT
TO USE
LOGIC!

OKAY--THIS THING GROWS
BY DRAWING THE SURROUNDING
LANDSCAPE UP INTO ITS BODY

AND ITS FORWARD MOTION
IS A DIRECT EFFECT OF
ITS GROWTH.

SO IF I CAN STOP
IT GROWING, I CAN
STOP IT MOVING

AND THE BEST WAY I
CAN THINK OF TO DO THAT
IS TO BORROW A PAGE FROM
THE FOREST BROTHER'S
MANUAL

TO STOP A FOREST
FIRE THEY SOMETIMES
BURN OUT A SWATH
OF LAND IN THE
FIRE'S PATH.

THERE! I'VE BLASTED
A CHANNEL
DOWN TO THE NATIVE
BEDROCK!

IS MY GUESS
CORRECT?

I WAS RIGHT!
THE MONSTER
CAN ONLY ASSIMILATE
LOOSE SOIL AND
ROCK.

IT CAN'T BREAK
THE SOLID ROCK
TO ADD TO ITSELF.

ITS MARCH
TOWARDS METROPOLIS
IS HALTED!

BUT FOR ALL
THAT, WHAT I'VE
DONE AMOUNTS
TO LITTLE MORE
THAN A DELAYING
TACTIC

THE MONSTER WON'T
BE FULLY STOPPED
UNTIL IT'S BEEN
DEACTIVATED

AND THAT I SUSPECT,
IS UP TO THE MYSTERY
SUBSTANCE!

SUPERMAN HAS RESTRAINED THE OUTER FORM OF THIS ABOMINATION.

NOW IT IS TIME TO ATTACK ITS FESTERING HEART.

YOU SPEAK TO ME OF SUFFERING.

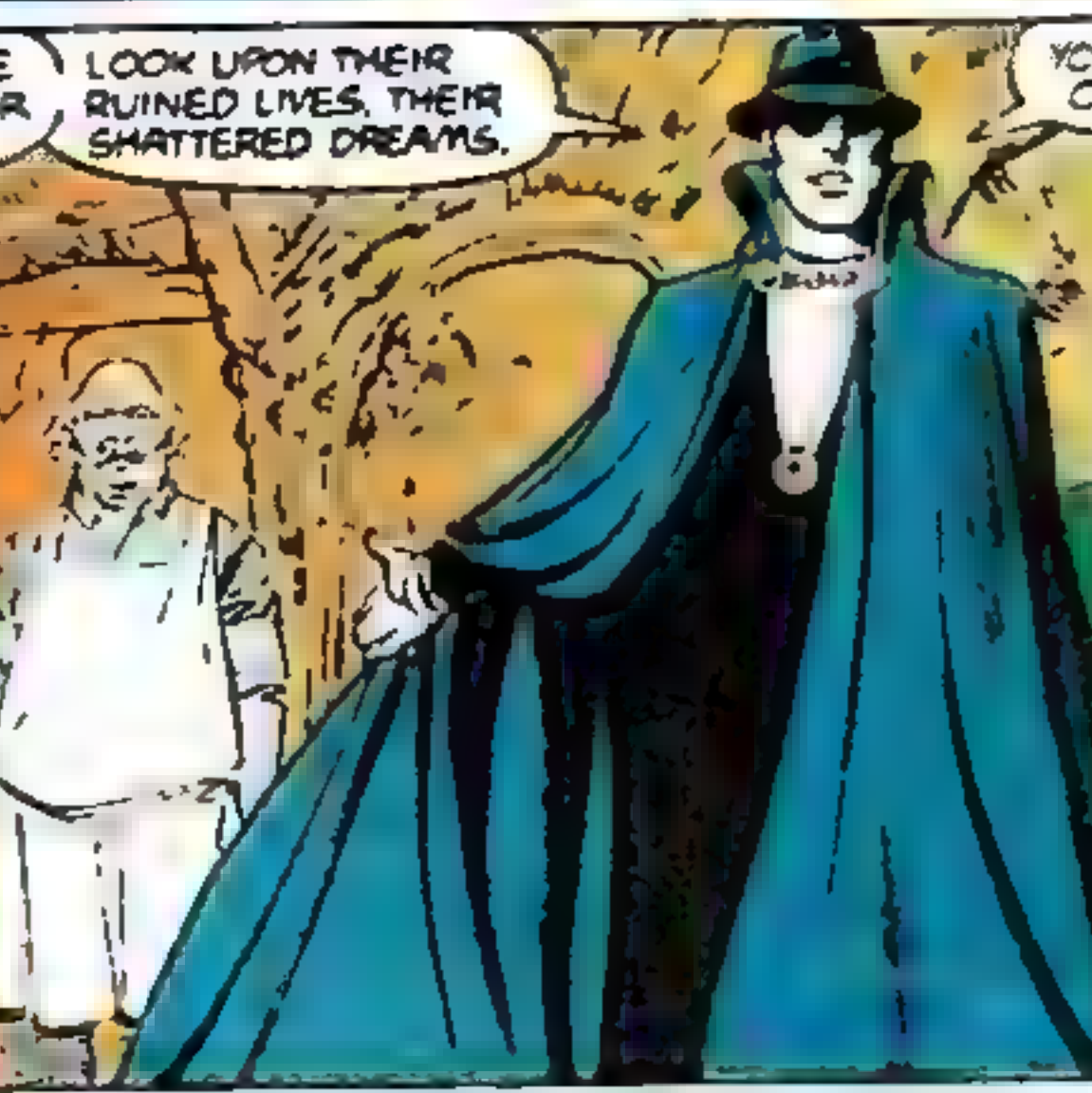


WHO ARE YOU TO CRY FOUL, WHO HAVE BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD SO MUCH ANGUISH BY YOUR OWN DEEDS?

WHO ARE YOU TO CLAIM THE PEACE OF QUIET DEATH, WHEN YOUR ONE & ONLY TO YOUR FELLOW MEN WAS PAIN.

LOOK YOU HERE DEAD THINGS

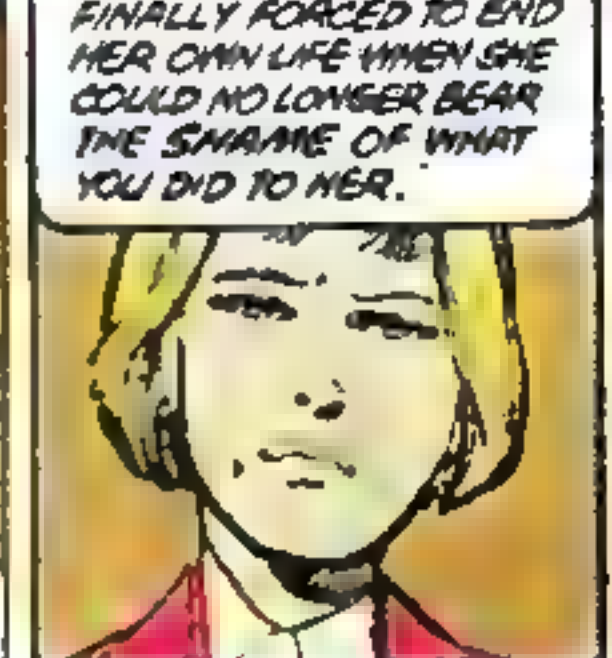
LOOK UPON THE FACES OF YOUR VICTIMS.



LOOK UPON THEIR RUINED LIVES, THEIR SHATTERED DREAMS.

YOU ACCUSE THE LIVING OF A CRIME AGAINST YOU

TELL THAT TALE TO THESE DEPARTED SOULS!

"TELL THE SHOPKEEPER MURDERED ON CHRISTMAS EVE FOR A HANDFUL OF CRUMPLED DOLLAR BILLS. 	"TELL THE SCHOOL-TEACHER, LEFT FOR DEAD IN A BLOOD-STAINED ALLEYWAY-- FINALLY FORCED TO END HER OWN LIFE WHEN SHE COULD NO LONGER BEAR THE SHAME OF WHAT YOU DID TO HER. 	"THE CHILD CONSUMED BY FLAME, BECAUSE ONE AMONG YOU ENJOYED THE SIGHT OF BUILDINGS BURNING 	"THE POLICEMAN, GUNNED DOWN IN THE LINE OF DUTY, BECAUSE HE STOOD BETWEEN YOU AND ESCAPE 
"THE FARMER, WHOSE HOME YOU INVADDED, AND WHO DIED IN A HAIL OF POLICE FIRE WHEN YOU TRIED TO SHOOT YOUR WAY TO FREEDOM. 	"THE JUDGE, EXPLODED IN HIS CAR BY YOUR VENGEFUL MACHINATIONS, BECAUSE HE HAD DELIVERED AGAINST YOU THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE LAW. 	"THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER, RUN DOWN WHEN YOUR GETAWAY CAR JUMPED THE SIDEWALK 	"THE SCAPESGOT, WRONGLY CONVICTED AND EXECUTED FOR YOUR CRIMES." 



YES!!

THEY ARE NOT DEAD YET. THEY ARE DEAD THINGS.

THEY ARE THE REMAINS OF THE PAST.



ALL THIS POWER AND THE LITTLE HEART IS THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINS OF ALL THAT WAS.

IS IT THE ONLY THING IN THE END?

WE KNOW WHAT HE SAW AND WHAT HE FELT.

YES. WE KNOW WHAT HE FELT. WE KNOW WHAT HE SAW. WE KNOW WHAT HE FELT. WE KNOW WHAT HE SAW.

WE KNOW WHAT HE FELT. WE KNOW WHAT HE SAW. WE KNOW WHAT HE FELT. WE KNOW WHAT HE SAW.

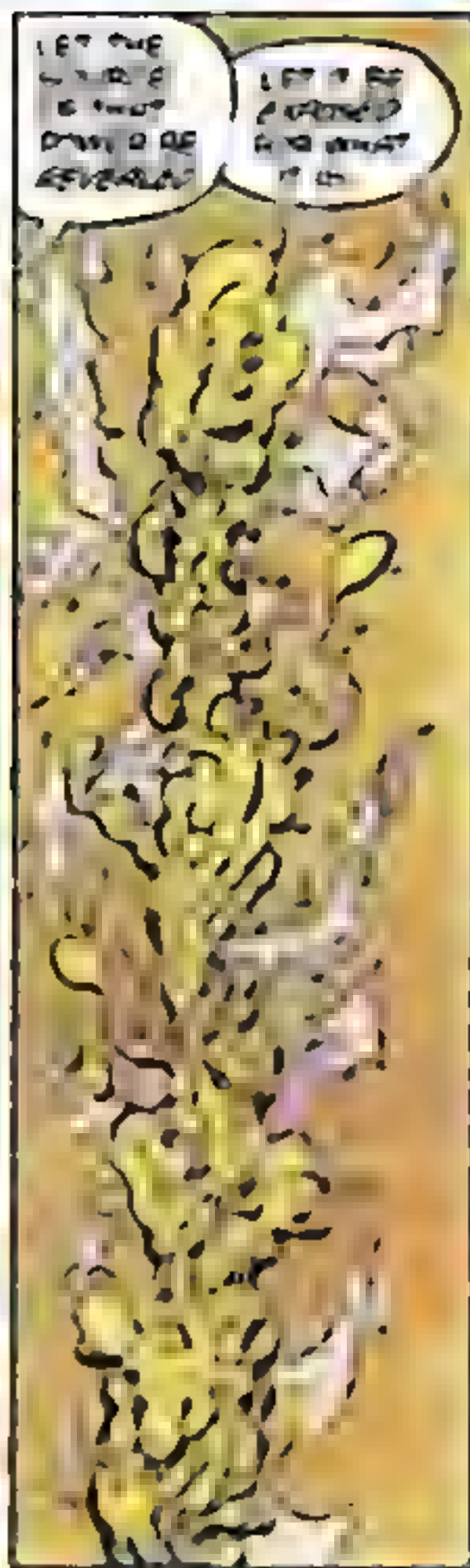


AND NOW, EVEN IN THIS FALSE HALF-LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING IN, YOU ARE NOT DEAD.

YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD.

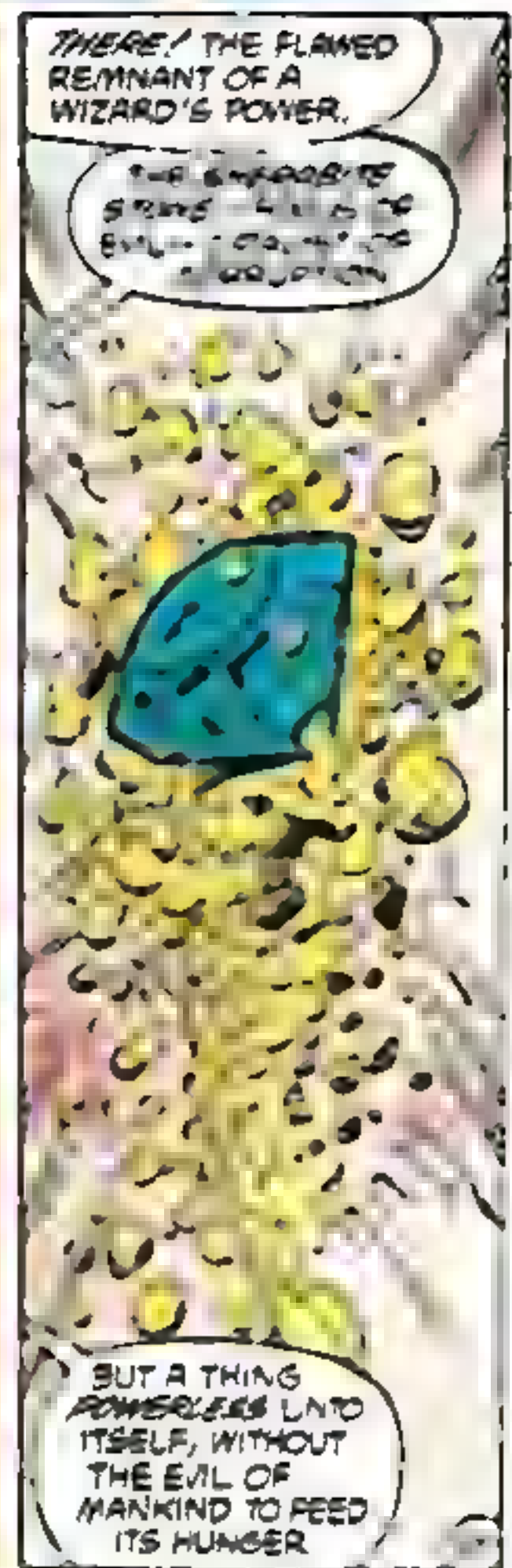
YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD.

YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD. YOU ARE NOT DEAD.



LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS. LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS. LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS.

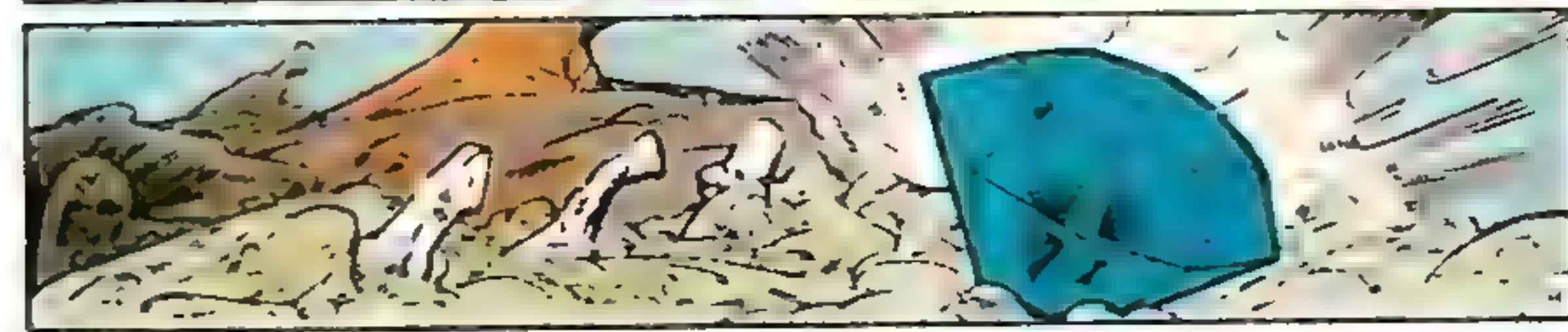
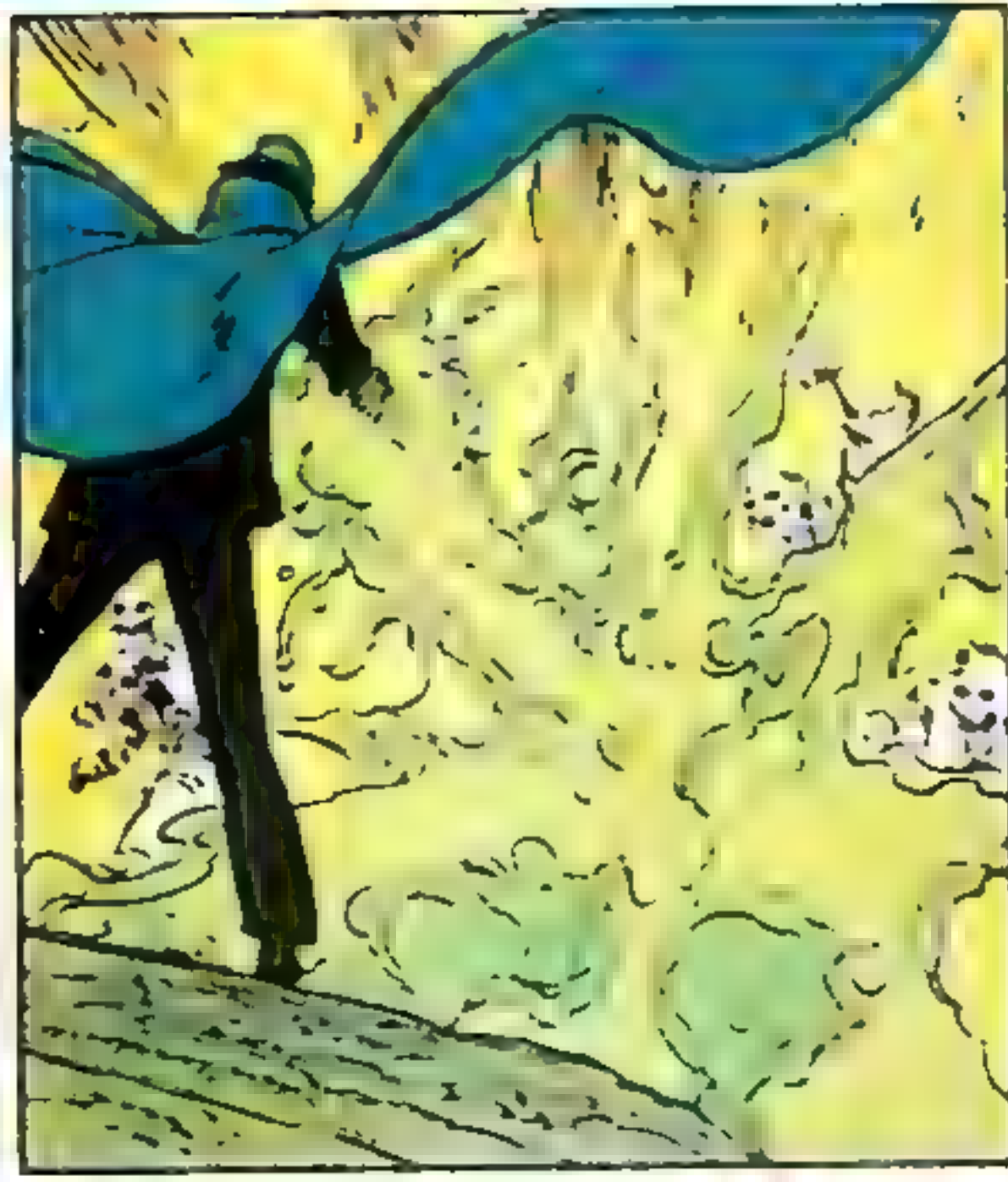
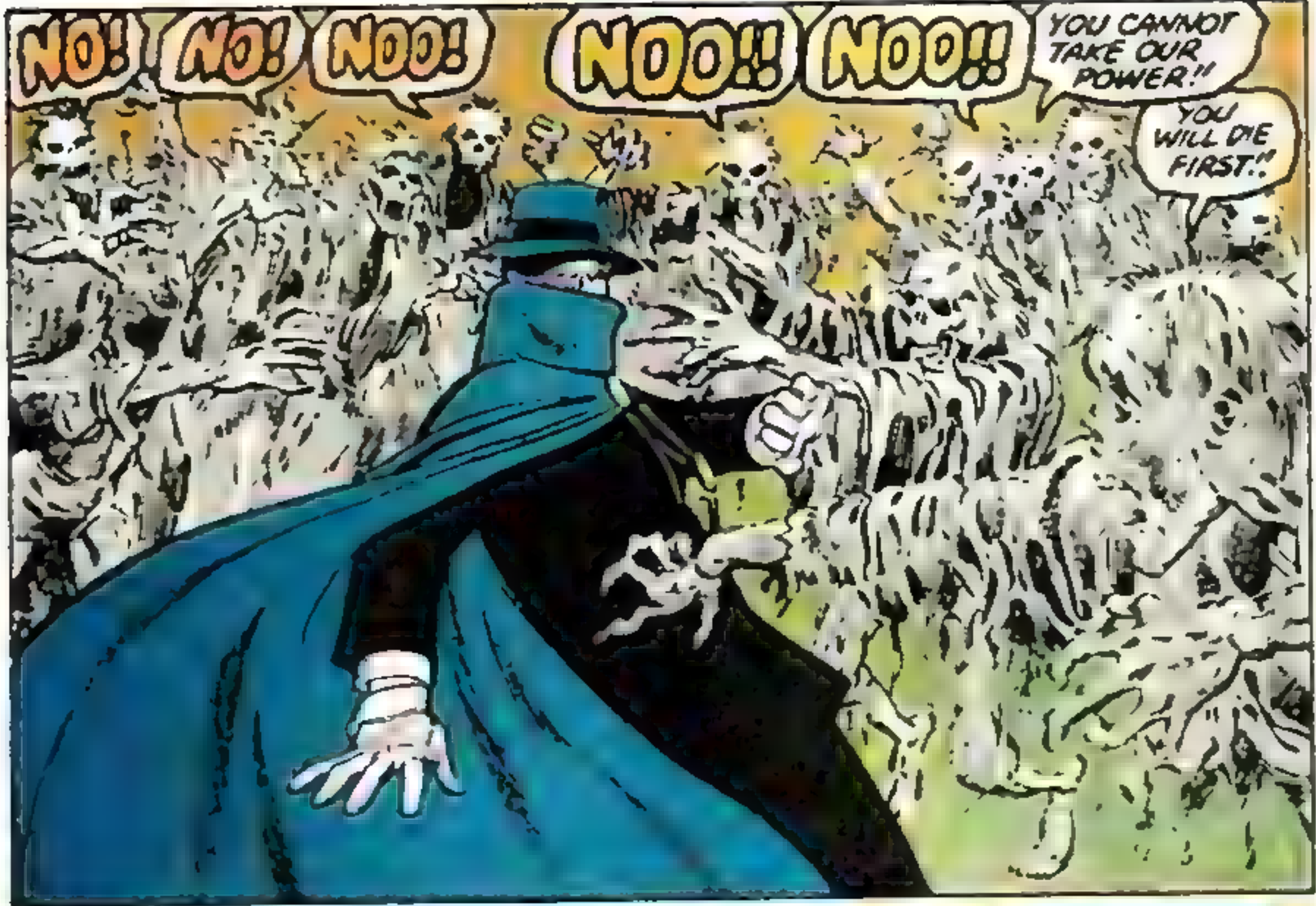
LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS. LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS. LET THE WORLD BE WHAT IT IS.

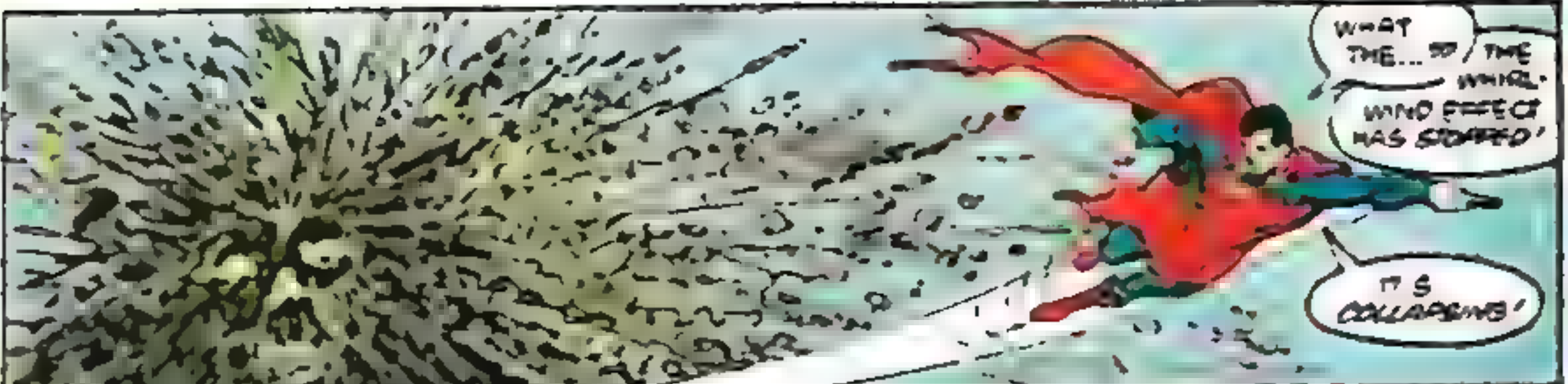


THERE! THE FLAMED REMNANT OF A WIZARD'S POWER.

THE REMNANT OF A WIZARD'S POWER. THE REMNANT OF A WIZARD'S POWER. THE REMNANT OF A WIZARD'S POWER.

BUT A THING POWERLESS INTO ITSELF, WITHOUT THE EVIL OF MANKIND TO FEED ITS HUNGER.





WHAT THE...? THE WHIRLWIND EFFECT HAS STOPPED!

IT'S COLLAPSING!

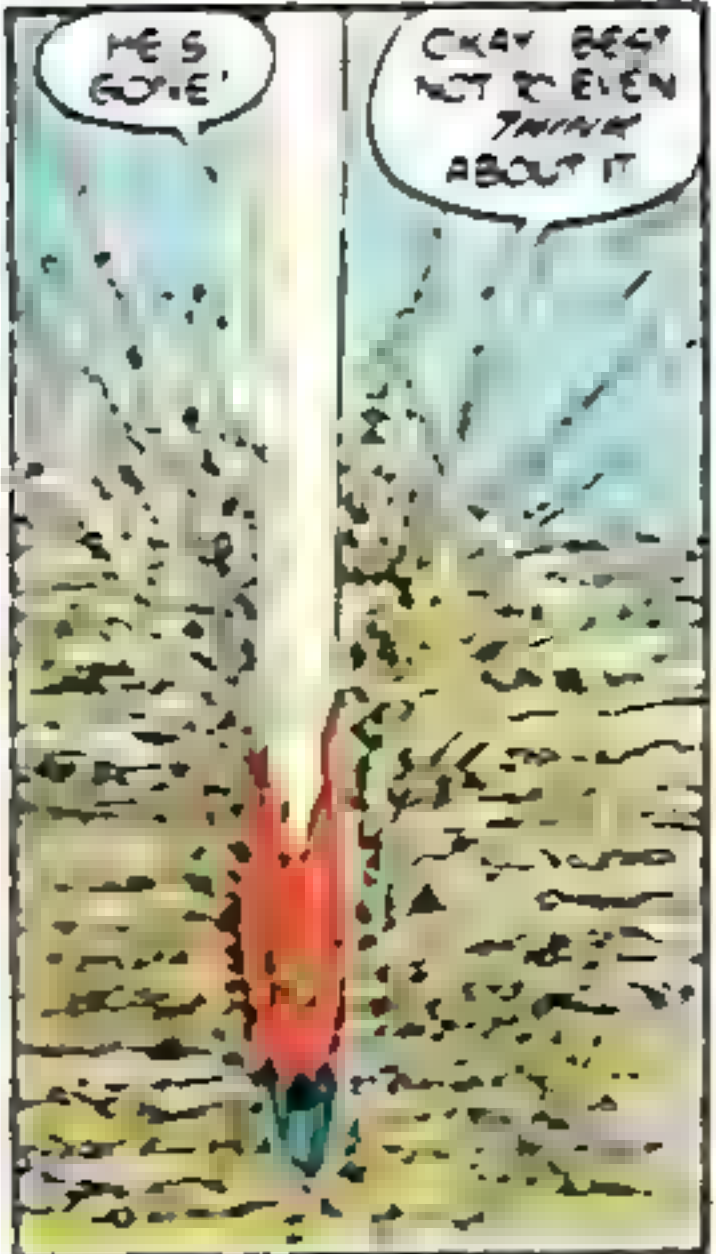


SUPERMAN!

YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY NOW!

THE FOCUS OF THE MONSTER'S POWER IS CREATED BY ITS CONTACT WITH THE EARTH!

"ARE YOU A STRANGER? WHAT DO YOU DO?"



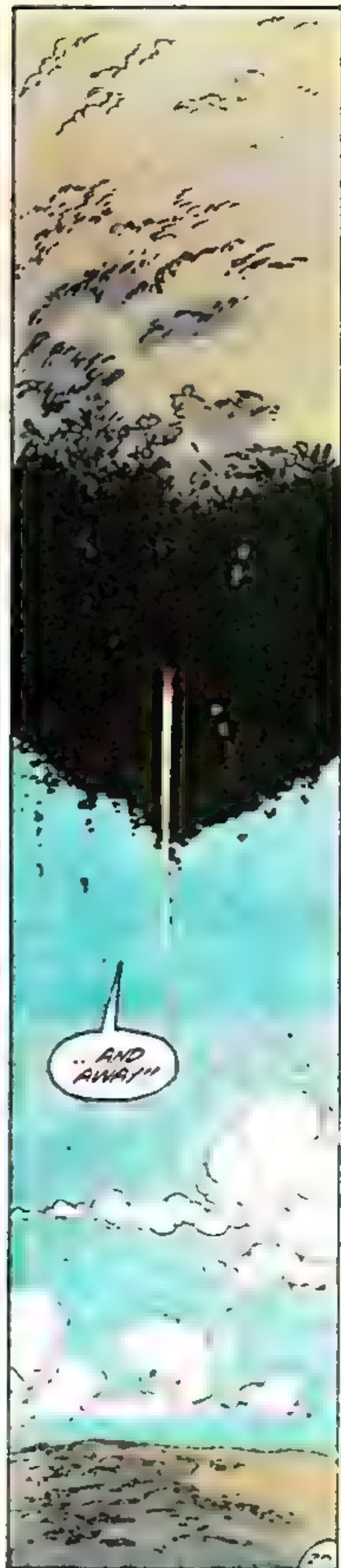
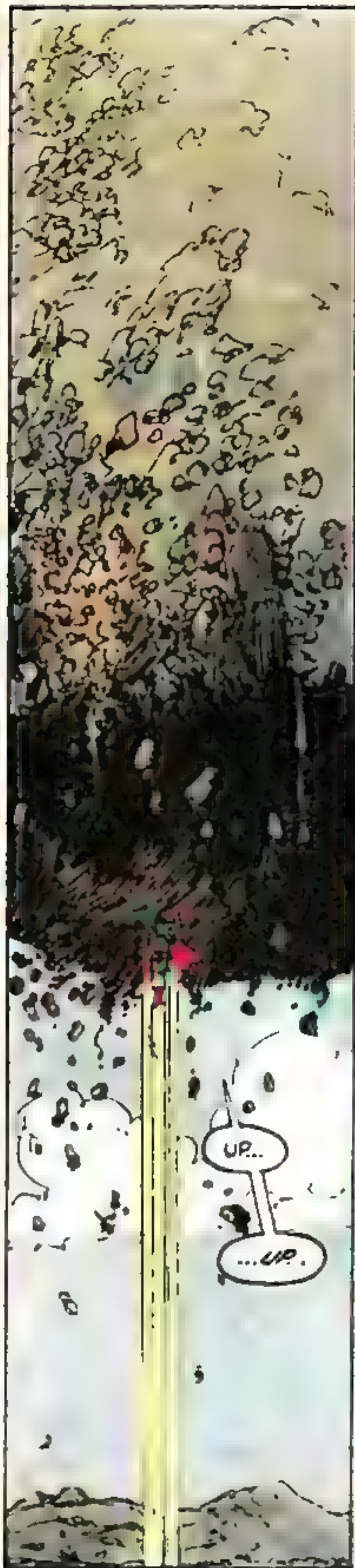
HE'S GONE!

OKAY, BEAT NOT TO EVEN THINK ABOUT IT



IF HE WANTS THIS THING SEPARATED FROM THE EARTH...

I'M JUST THE BOY IDOL-- COME-- DO IT!



I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE
WHAT THE STRANGER
MEANS BY "BREAKING
CONTACT."

IT MAY BE ENOUGH IF
THIS LUMP OF REAL
ESTATE IS NO LONGER
TOUCHING THE
GROUND...

...BUT I THINK I'LL
PLAY IT SAFE AND PUSH
IT RIGHT OUT INTO SPACE!

THIS IS ABOUT AS HIGH
AS I DARE GO. SHOULD
BE ENOUGH, THOUGH.

I'VE CALCULATED
THE TRAJECTORY.
ONE GOOD SHOVE
WILL SEND THIS
THING INTO ORBIT
AROUND THE SUN!

ONE MOMENT,
SUPERMAN.

STRANGER!

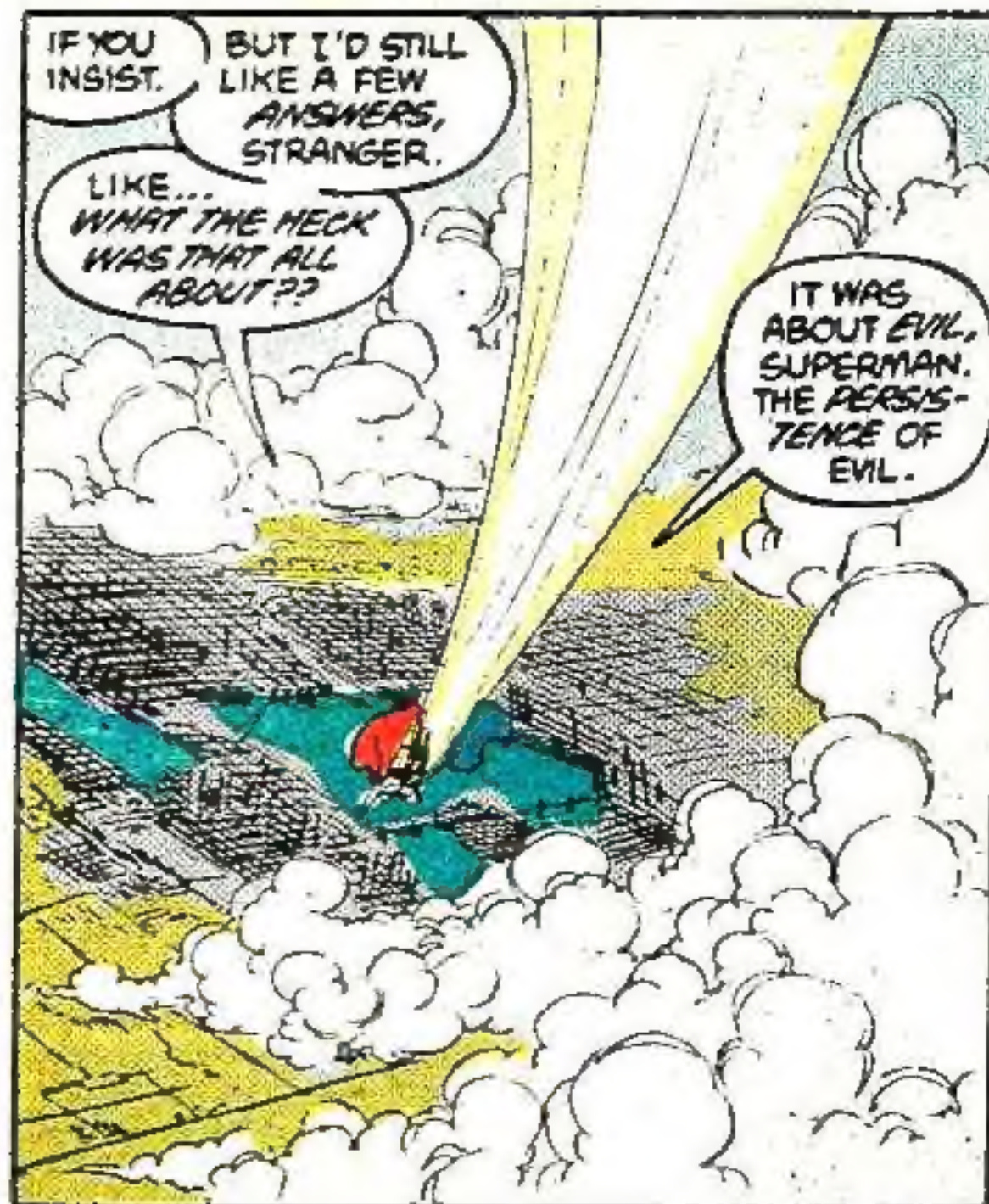
I DIDN'T KNOW
YOU COULD SURVIVE
IN OUTER SPACE.

AND, COME TO
THAT, HOW CAN
I HEAR YOU?

OR YOU, ME?

THERE IS MUCH
ABOUT ME YOU DO NOT
KNOW, SUPERMAN.

MUCH THAT IS BEST
LEFT UNKNOWN.



IF YOU INSIST.

BUT I'D STILL LIKE A FEW ANSWERS, STRANGER.

LIKE... WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT ALL ABOUT??

IT WAS ABOUT EVIL, SUPERMAN. THE PERSISTENCE OF EVIL.



IT WAS ALSO ABOUT DEATH, AND HOW SOMETIMES IT IS NOT SO FINAL A BARRIER AS WE MIGHT LIKE TO THINK.

HOW SO?



THERE ARE MANY FORCES THAT CAN BE STRONGER THAN DEATH, SUPERMAN.

LOVE CAN BE ONE.

SADLY, HATE CAN BE ANOTHER. HERE TODAY WE SAW WHAT HATE CAN DO, WHEN THE CHANCE ARISES.



WITHIN THAT MOUND OF EARTH, THERE GREW AND FESTERED A HATRED THAT LASTED CENTURIES. THE BURNING HATRED OF THE GUILTY FOR THE INNOCENT.

A HATRED THAT AT LAST FOUND RELEASE, THROUGH THE ANCIENT POWER OF THIS GEMSTONE. A SMALL PART OF THE SAME MAGIC THAT GAVE FORM AND SUBSTANCE TO ARATHAZA.

GLADLY.

YOU MAY DESTROY IT NOW, SUPERMAN.



BUT... YOU STILL HAVEN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION ENTIRELY, STRANGER.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT FINALLY HAPPENED IN THERE.



NOR HAVE I ANY INTENTION OF DOING SO, SUPERMAN.

FORGIVE THE CLICHÉ, MY FRIEND...

...BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW!

END



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FROM WHERE I SIT: PART 3

Look: Dick Giordano just came into my office—he looks angry, but he's smiling. (He's always smiling, y'understand. You can tell he's angry when he smiles like a happy shark.) He says to me, "Helfer—you've been rattling off at that typewriter, writing about god knows what for how long ... wouldja just print the LETTERS?!"

I politely remind him that one of the editor's jobs is to set a tone for the reader, to familiarize him or her with the backgrounds of the characters within, and the creators behind, every book.

He says I've already done that—to continue any longer would be redundant, and probably—perish the thought—BORING.

I say just one more paragraph.

He says no.

We print lots of letters.

Dear Mr. Helfer,

Congratulations on MAN OF STEEL #2; I found it MOST enjoyable to read. In fact, Writer John Byrne has succeeded magnificently in capturing the true spirit of Superman, especially the convincing use of tongue-in-cheek humor. In fact, Superman in #2 reminds me so much of the first *Superman* movie that I could see Christopher Reeve in those situations! But the real clincher is the last page: Lois Lane's reaction to Clark Kent's first story for the *Daily Planet* really made my day! Let's hope for a long stay by Byrne on the writing of Superman; he has truly produced one of the most refreshing comics I have read in a LONG time...

Yours truly,

Raymond Chuang
2650 American River Drive
Sacramento, CA 95864

(The Superman movies were indeed an influence on John and Marv and Jerry, Ray—but by no means were they the ONLY influence. All concerned with the project are real fans of the 1940s Max Fleisher cartoons, and the '50s television series too—and THOSE influences cannot be overlooked. Matter of fact, if you take a look at the very first issue of ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN (#424, since we've retained the original Superman numbering system here) you'll see the return of Inspector Henderson—a staple of the Television series, but rarely ever seen in Superman's previous comic book incarnation.)

Sirs:

Thank you for THE MAN OF STEEL #1. After a year of hype, newspaper stories, seeing John Byrne with Jane Pauley on "Today," etc., it was good to see the work which has been the point all along. The covers for both were great, but "the comics event of the century" is a bit overstated to my way of thinking. If anything, ACTION #1 holds that title; without that fateful magazine you good people would have had to find other lines of work. The talented Mr. Byrne would almost certainly be making less money and we would all be the poorer.

I suppose a lot of readers will be ticked with you for fooling around with the legend. However, I've read more Superman stories than most people and I am pleased as can be about these streamlining efforts. The way I see it, comic creators today have to deal with two controlling factors (discounting the almighty dollar). Fans today demand good stories, but they are even more adamant about maintaining continuity. While these two interests often are in opposition, your new efforts should make continuity easier to keep in check while the considerable efforts of Byrne and Wolfman ensure good stories aplenty.

Up to this point I have discussed our mutual adventure in general terms. To make specific reference to the first installment, rest assured I am pleased. The antiseptic Krypton with its sensitive Jor-El seemed an appropriate contrast to the homely kindness and love of the Kents. Young Kal-El's (that is still his name, isn't it?) growth on Earth seemed eminently more logical here than it has in the past. No more stupid Superbaby nonsense and no more Superboy continuity mishmash. Good. I like it.

I also liked the art very much. I have never liked Byrne's inks on his own pencils but the proper inker makes Byrne look great. In the past Terry Austin has been tops, but I am pleased to see that one of my all-time favorite inkers works quite well with Byrne. Way to go, Giordano! Sitting behind a desk hasn't atrophied your skills a bit! And now you have a task which truly befits your talents. Go for it!

Now, fellows, lest this all go to your heads, I must tell you how biased I am. DC introduced me to comics, and I am unspeakably excited about the new creativity and projects which are coming from DC. I desperately want them all to succeed. SUPERMAN, BATMAN, LEGENDS, WATCHMEN, and so on, I

want you guys to thrill fandom and expand your readership like crazy. Comics are a lot more fun with more people sharing the experience. You guys do your part, I and other fans will try and stay in touch and let you know how we feel, and with effort on both our parts we should enjoy one heckuva ride!

Good luck and let's go!

Mic McConnell

1910 Le Sueur Rd.

Richmond, VA 23229

(Hmmm ... Maybe you're right, Mic—Action #1 WAS the comics event of the century. We've been taking a bit of flack for that lately, and we can only guess that it was our rampant enthusiasm which allowed us to drop that line on our first issue. Truthfully, though—given the media's interest in the revamping of the legend, it was very hard for US to remain unaffected by the Supermanian running around here. It certainly wasn't our intent to try and overshadow either the importance of that comic or Superman's creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. Our debt to both them and the character they created is obvious to us every day—and we're proud to include their credits on each Superman title we publish.

And on another note entirely, we hope you're pleased with Dick's finishes over John's layouts here in ACTION—Dick will be our regular embellisher here—while over in SUPERMAN, Terry Austin will be on hand to ink John's complete pencils for the first three issues. After that, Karl Kesel takes over as the regular inker on that book. Guess you're getting the best of both worlds, eh?)

Dear Mr. Byrne,

WOW!

Of course I refer to THE MAN OF STEEL #1! I have a feeling that your work on SUPERMAN is really going to bring me back to the character (since I haven't read an issue of SUPERMAN in a long time). Now, I am not really a fan or a follower of your work at Marvel (no offense to you but I just don't read many comics these days) but when I heard that SUPERMAN was getting a face-lift of sorts and that YOU admired the first SUPERMAN movie (the BEST of 'em all!) ... well, I had a feeling that some pretty terrific things were in store for SUPERMAN.

It's probably easier if I just say that I praise EVERYTHING I've seen so far (keep this a short letter). Let's face it, previous incarnations of SUPERMAN

haven't lent themselves to logic or a more adult readership. Maybe I'm overly excited, but I feel that this new version is going to be the definitive SUPERMAN! The planet Krypton has NEVER looked so good (except maybe in the movie). Likewise, the whole society is a welcome change ... it seems as if you REALLY put some thought into this.

As for explaining SUPERMAN's powers—wonderful! I especially like the fact that his costume is just ordinary cloth, protected by his body's aura (maybe later he can get A CAPE of flame-proof material, so that friction and fire won't keep reducing it to threads). Also, if Clark is ever BLASTED in the chest HIS suit won't be destroyed, revealing a big "S"!

Finally, let me just mention that, even though I am no artist, I do draw a pretty mean "S" myself. Like you, I too—ever since I was a kid, in fact—have always drawn the NEGATIVE SPACES in order to achieve the proper look (friends and family have always been amazed by this little trick!). Needless to say, I got a kick out of your "personal view" on THE MAN OF STEEL's inside back cover.

Well, you sure have scored a big hit with me! Have fun!

Brian Dreger
139 Academy Court, Apt. D
Elyria, OH 44035

(Why BOTHER getting a flame-proof cape, Brian? John and Jerry have so much FUN drawing it all torn up!)

Dear John,

Needless to say I am very excited about the new direction for Superman. He desperately needs some "pepping up" and you are the guy to do it!

The first issue of MAN OF STEEL has already brought changes. Ma and Pa Kent alive! Young Clark a sports hero! No Superboy! The meeting with Lois Lane! WOW!! (One question: if there is no Superboy, how will there ever be a Legion of Super-Heroes?)

Continued good luck with this series and with your future with Superman.

Steve O'Brien
4 Running Brook Cir.
Natick, MA 01760

(We're glad you asked that question, Steve—and while there may SEEM to be problems with the origin of the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, upcoming issues of that book will clear up that problem forever. You'll start seeing a HINT of what's up in more than a few LEGENDS crossover books, but we'll leave it at that, except to say: Everything you know ... is WRONG.)

Dear John,

I just received my reading copy of THE MAN OF STEEL today along with 5 other copies to keep protected from those nasty elements that can just destroy a good comic.

I took one look at the front cover and then took one look at the back cover and I

knew right then even without opening it that it would be an instant success. The front cover—well, both front and back—had that special touch to them that sort of asks you to tell it what you think of it and let me tell you if it had asked me that question I first would have fainted then when I had recovered I would have said—OUTSTANDING, SUPERIOR, and SUPERB.

Your artwork was fantastic as was Dick's inking. The picture of Kryptonopolis on the splash page was great, the landscape, clouds, red sun, they all seemed to blend together; in short, the city didn't look like a scientific disaster like it had in the past.

I also enjoyed looking at the new uniforms for Jor-El and Lara, I was getting sick of the little sun on the old uniform.

And I indeed like the idea of only one chunk of Kryptonite existing on Earth, though I still would at least have two or three more chunks out in space within the solar system.

And having Clark gradually realize the abilities that he possesses is a great path.

Well, before I leave you I would like to ask you some questions...

1) Will anyone besides his Earth parents ever know his true identity, even for a short while? I think it would make an interesting plot for someone to catch him in the middle of becoming Superman.

2) Does an Argo City or Kandor exist in this new plot, but unlike the previous one they were destroyed with Krypton?

3) Does a Kara or Zor-El exist in this plot but unlike the previous one they too were destroyed with Krypton?

4) Finally, in the previous plot the costume of Superman was made from materials found in the rocket. Being from Krypton, they were indestructible, but in the new plot the costume appears to be made from earthly fibers that will tear if Superman is attacked by knife, gun, anything. Correct me if I am mistaken.

I thank you, John, for bringing Superman, the biggest crimefighter ever, out of the hole, the hole that was filled with stupid plots and silly situations. Thanks again.

Sincerely,
Chris Blackmer
Lansing, MI

(As you must know by now, Chris, that even though there WAS only one chunk of Kryptonite on Earth, in the hands of Lex Luthor, a little chunk goes a LOOONG way (See Superman #2 if you don't know what we're talking about here). As for your questions, we'll answer them in turn. 1: Yes, as seen in MAN OF STEEL #6 and SUPERMAN #2. 2: Right—those cities DID exist, but were destroyed. 3: Ditto—probably... 4: As said elsewhere, Superman's body maintains an "Aura" that protects anything close to his skin—the limit is about 1/2 inch, but that's enough to keep his costume, but NOT his cape, clean and fresh.)

Dear Sirs,

I LOVE IT!!!

The art, the writing, everything. I love it! I will have to admit I have only bought a few of John Byrne's books in the past. Only recently have I began to enjoy his work in *The Fantastic Four*. I short-changed myself.

I did have a few complaints and I might as well start here. Lara's hair, or hat, or whatever that was. Too much, Mr. Byrne. I have read every version of Superman's origin and already this has become my favorite version. Lara's reaction to the "savage" was, in my sight, hilarious.

I did, however, find a mistake on the first page of chapter one. As Clark Kent races down the field for his 10th touchdown, I looked on the scoreboard and noticed that the score could not possibly be right. If he had scored ten touchdowns that game the minimum score should have been 54 not 62. I also would find it hard to believe that he only scored ten touchdowns that season, seeing how it was the last game of the season. O.K. so it was the only mistake I could find, it was still a mistake. I could just imagine Clark's surprise when he learned that he could fly. I thought that was the perfect way to become introduced to his power. At the end of chapter one I am wondering just who it was that he had to go see. It is my bet that it was Lana Lang. I could be wrong, though.

Chapter Two let us know that the Kents are alive and well and I like that. When I first heard that they were going to be brought back I said bad idea. But I like it. He now has someone he can ask for advice as well as someone who can make him a home-cooked meal.

Well, that's all, folks.

Keith R. Jones
130 Oak Hill
Brandon, MS 39042

(Yeah, we knew that mistake was there. We put it there on purpose, just to see how many of you out there were sports fans. Yeah, that's the ticket! We ... no, huh? You're not buying it? Oh, well, guess you got us on that one, Keith. In fact, that one slipped by practically EVERYONE at DC (and practically EVERYONE read the first issue WEEKS before it came out). Everyone, except, that is, ole Eagle Eye Julie Schwartz, who stormed into our office the day after MAN OF STEEL #1 hit the stands with a sardonic twinkle in his eye. He pointed out the error—while pointing out that HE'D never make a mistake like that. But when WE started pointing out typos on his SCIENCE FICTION GRAPHIC NOVELS he clammed up a bit—but only until he discovered we'd made up the typos!)

NEXT ISSUE: Our first three-part crossover concludes here next month—a sweeping saga that Leaps off the pages of LEGENDS, into SUPERMAN #3, then to ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #426, and finally, into ACTION #436, where Superman meets up with none other than ... THE NEW GODS!

—ANDY HELFER